



## ***AOT in Action***

### ***TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!***

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

#### **A Message from the Director:**

Good morning.

We just wrapped up an incredible Educational Seminar for Tourism Organizations (ESTO) conference! Last week, more than 450 destination marketing organization professionals gathered at The Phoenician for what is known as the tourism industry's premier networking and information sharing conference. Each day was filled with dynamic speakers and informative breakout sessions. It was a wonderful opportunity to network with colleagues from across the nation and industry experts on issues that effect tourism. I know that many of our colleagues took time out to explore some of Arizona's great destinations and were overwhelmed with the variety of opportunities the Grand Canyon State has offer. I know we've made some life-long fans of Arizona.

Also, a wonderful opportunity was presented to me as my industry peers have recently elected me Vice Chair of the National Council of State Tourism Directors (NCSTD). The NCSTD brings together tourism directors and their staff from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the five U.S. territories. The mission of the NCSTD is to leverage the collective strength of state tourism offices in influence public policy in regards to the travel industry and provide leadership and information on issues impacting tourism. This is such a great honor for me and is just one more way I will be able to continue representing the needs of the Arizona tourism industry at a national level.

Have a great week.

*Margie R. Ennen*

Margie A. Emmermann  
Director  
Arizona Office of Tourism

## **AOT News Flash**

### **Rural Tourism Development Grant Program Guidelines for FY08**

The Rural Tourism Development Grant Program (RTDGP) guidelines for FY08 are now available. The primary objective of this competitive grant program is to provide coordinated funding for tourism related infrastructure projects in rural communities throughout the State. The funding amount for FY08 is \$550,000. These funds assist rural economic development through tourism to strengthen the regional and local economies and expand tourism in rural and Tribal communities throughout Arizona. The primary function of the infrastructure project must be tourism development and the project must be designed to initiate economic growth and enhance future tourism development. Applications are available on AOT's business-to-business Web site [www.azot.gov](http://www.azot.gov) under the Grants section. Applications must be received by the Arizona Office of Tourism no later than 5 p.m. Thursday, August, 30, 2007. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Karen McClurg, Tourism Education and Development Manager at [kmcclurg@azot.gov](mailto:kmcclurg@azot.gov) or by phone at 602-364-3708.

## **Industry News**

### **Adventure Travel for Families Snowballs**

Melanie McQuaig smiles as she watches a dozen children playing amid the wildflowers in the distance. Among them are her two girls, ages 6 and 11, who should be tired after hiking nearly 4 miles up a narrow mountain trail to this glorious lunch spot – a remote subalpine meadow flanked by towering peaks. And yet the girls don't even seem winded. For millions of American families, says USA Today, summer vacation means little more than a lazy week lounging on a beach. Millions more head for the relative relaxation of a cruise ship or the manufactured fun of a theme park. But like the McQuaigs, who are on an activity-packed, five-night "multisport" camping tour of northwestern Montana organized by active travel company Backroads, a growing number of families are choosing a more adventurous option. Launched in 1989, Backroads' line of family-focused hiking, biking and multisport adventures, dubbed Backroads Family Trips, has been growing at a rapid pace. Bookings this year alone are up 35 percent. Similar increases are being reported in family offerings from other leading outdoor tour companies such as Mountain Travel Sobek and Butterfield & Robinson. Luxury tour operator Abercrombie & Kent, with a 30 percent rise in families booking adventure tours this year, created a website especially for family adventures, [akadventurecrew.com](http://akadventurecrew.com). The companies say the boom is partly the result of the growing family focus among their core baby boomer and post-boomer clientele, who now have kids old enough to bike, hike and raft. Always an outdoorsy crowd, they now want to bring their kids along when they set off on adventures.

### **AAA Services Now Available on Cell Phones**

AAA's propriety travel information, mapping and emergency road service are now available on select GPS-enabled mobile phones via a newly launched service called AAA Mobile. The service provides audible, turn-by-turn directions as well as information such as Diamond ratings for hotels and restaurants and points of interest found in AAA's TourBook guides. In addition, AAA members can use the phones to send their location to AAA to obtain roadside assistance. AAA

Mobile is powered by the Networks In Motion location-based services platform, and is available for download directly from select GPS-enabled wireless phones. (*Special to TA*)

### **Expedited Passport Service Still Slow**

Overwhelmed by the public's demand for passports, the State Department Thursday announced that travelers paying an extra \$60 for speedy processing of their passport applications should check the Internet to see how long they will have to wait. The agency, in a Federal Register notice, said it had changed the definition of "expedited passport processing" from three business days to a more accordion-like standard of "a number of business days." Rather than process a passport within three days of receipt of an application, the State Department's Web site, <http://travel.state.gov>, said it would take 10 days for internal processing. That would put door-to-door expedited service at about three weeks, not much different than the two to three weeks applicants have been forced to wait for much of the summer after paying the expedited fee. With passports still in high demand, the wait for routine processing is 10 to 12 weeks, according to yesterday's Web notice. (*Pages D4, Washington Post; 4A, USA Today; AP*)

### **Firm Predicts Another Record Year for Hotel Sales**

The U.S. hotel industry is on track for a fourth consecutive year of record sales, according to Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels. The investment and research firm estimates that \$48 billion worth of U.S. hotel sales could be completed by the end of 2007, a 376 percent increase over last year's record-breaking \$35 billion. The company also said that its most recent survey indicates that while yields are tightening and investors' expectations have tapered slightly due to the recent credit crunch, the strength of the economy combined with constrained supply will continue to create an attractive investment environment for the industry. (*Travel Weekly.com, 8/16*)

### **Best Western Releases Family Travel Study**

Today's family vacations are shorter yet more elaborate and expensive, involving journeys to farther--particularly exotic--locations than what most people remember from their childhood, according to a new survey by Harris Interactive commissioned by Best Western International. The study said travelers are more likely to include pets in their trips over grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Eighty-eight percent of U.S. adults who take family vacations indicated that a getaway these days is different from when they were children. More than half (55 percent) claimed that today's vacations are more expensive, while just over two-fifths (42 percent) said they now travel greater distances. (*Modern Agent.com*)